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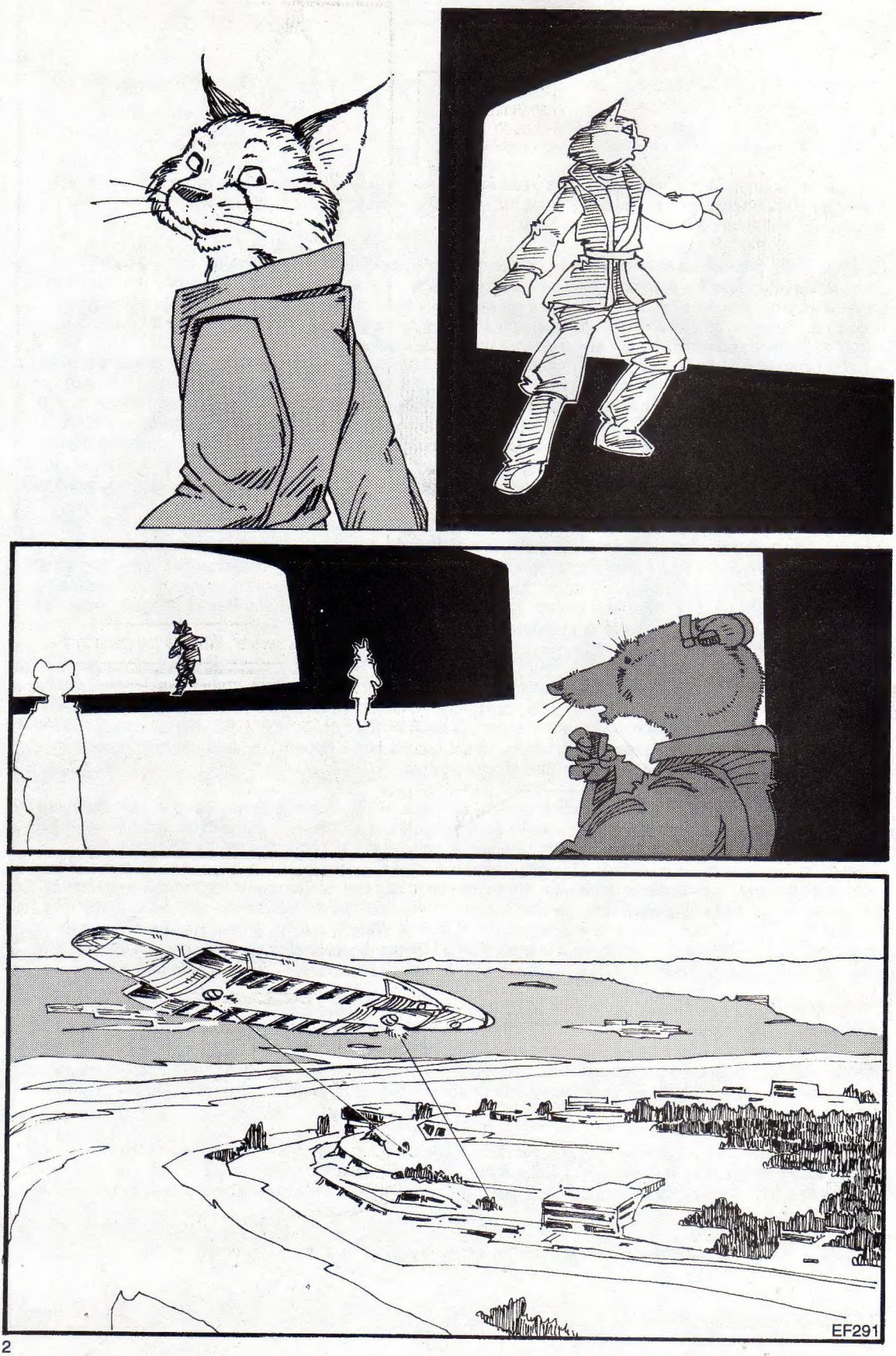
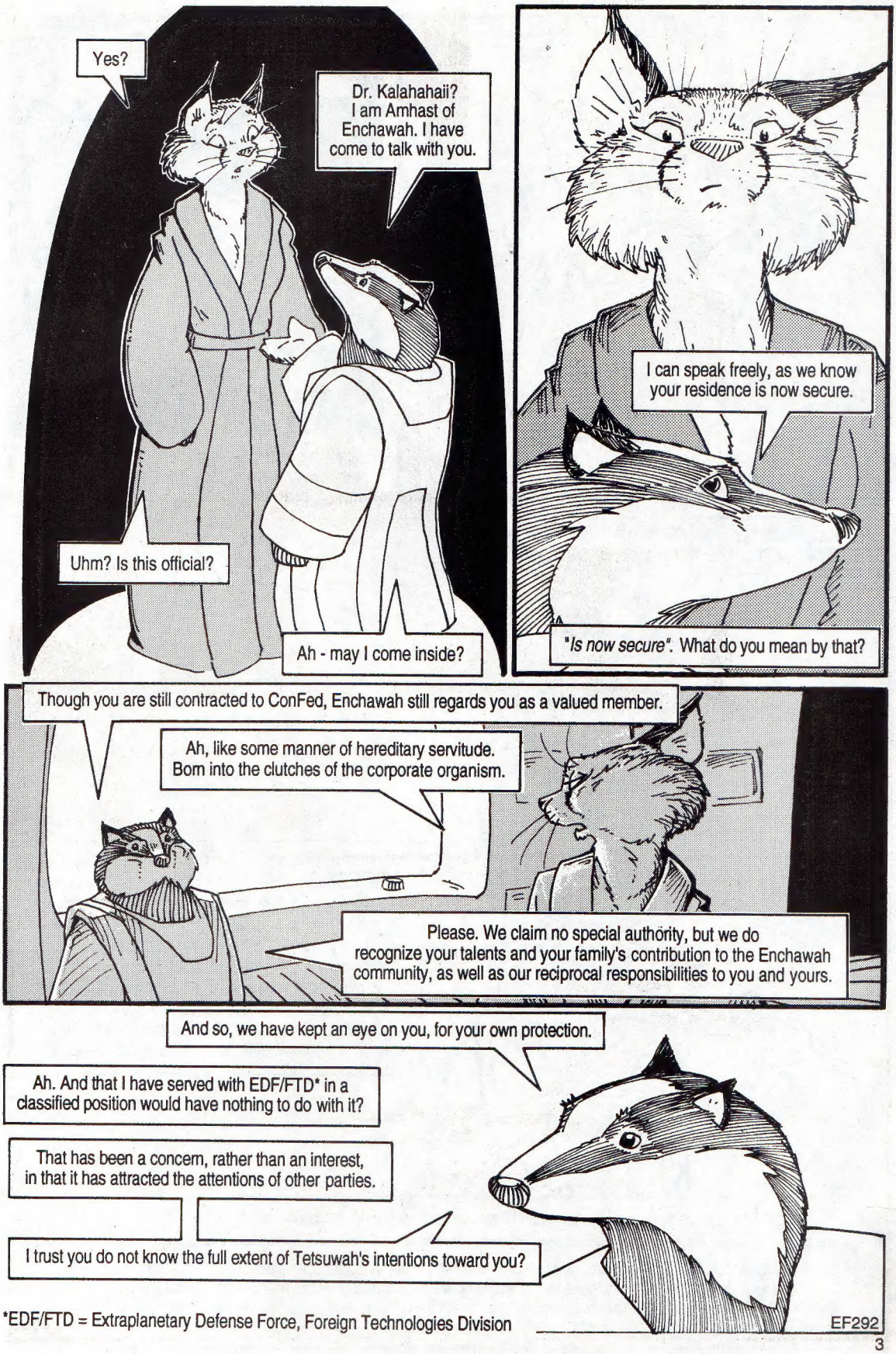
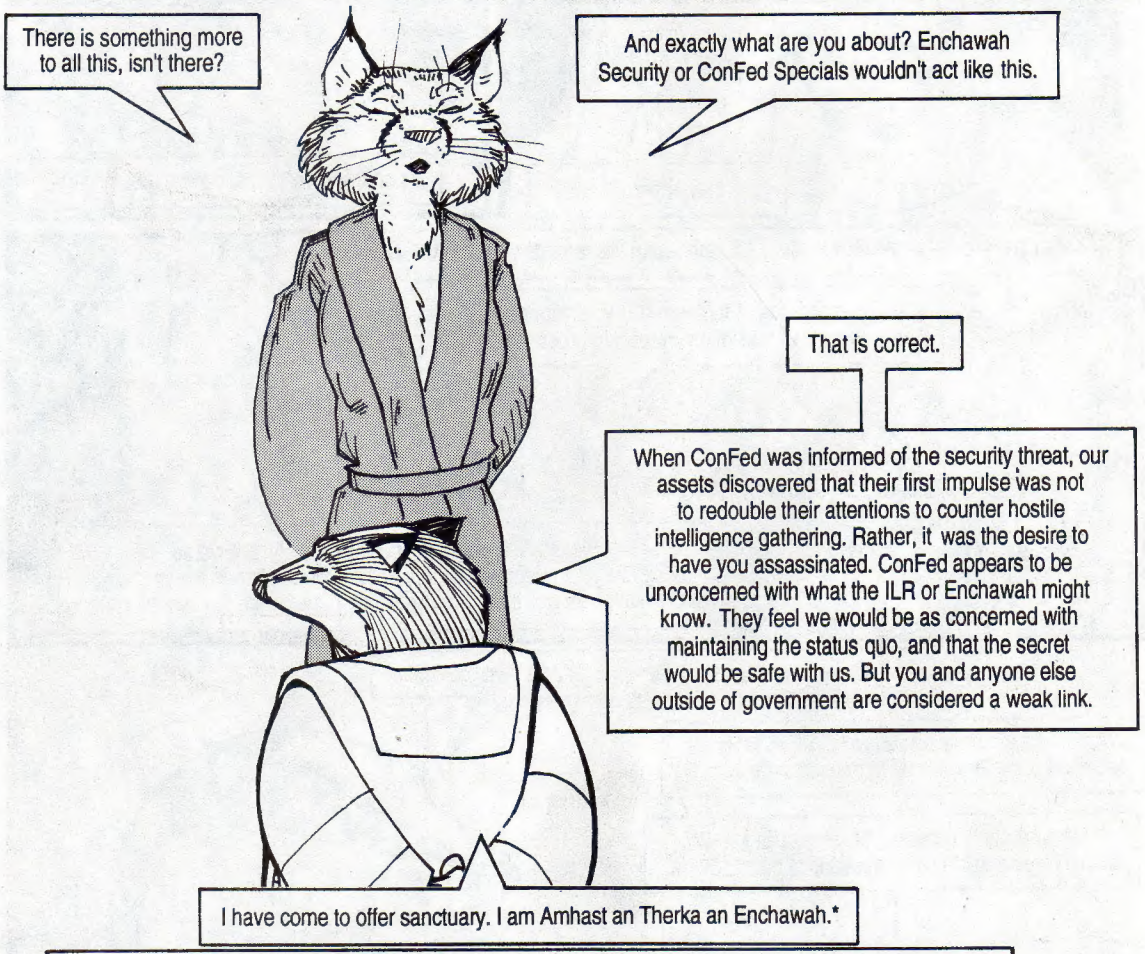
ALBEDO
ANTHROPOMORPHICS


EF291

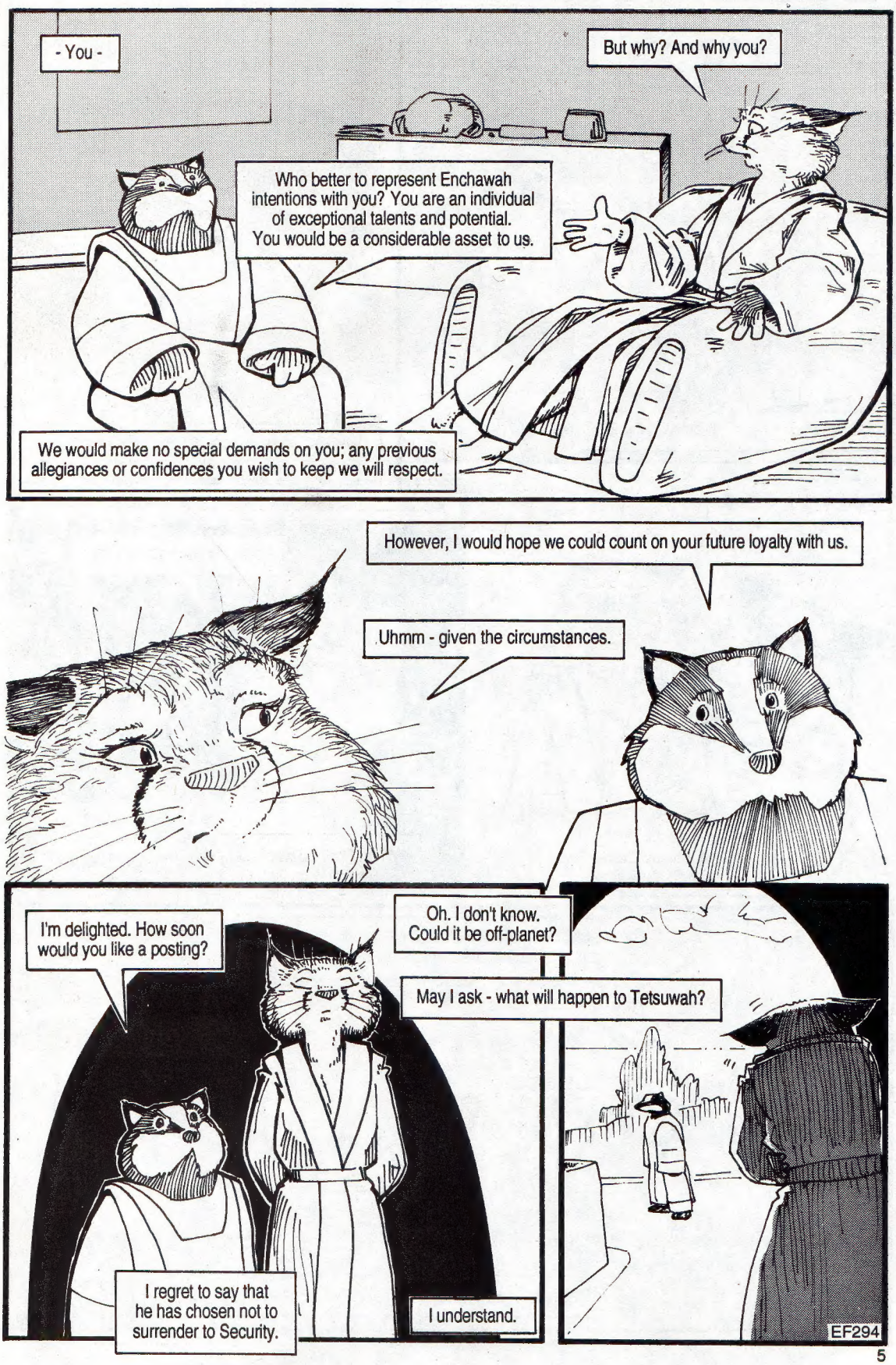


*EDF/FTD = Extraplanetary Defense Force, Foreign Technologies Division

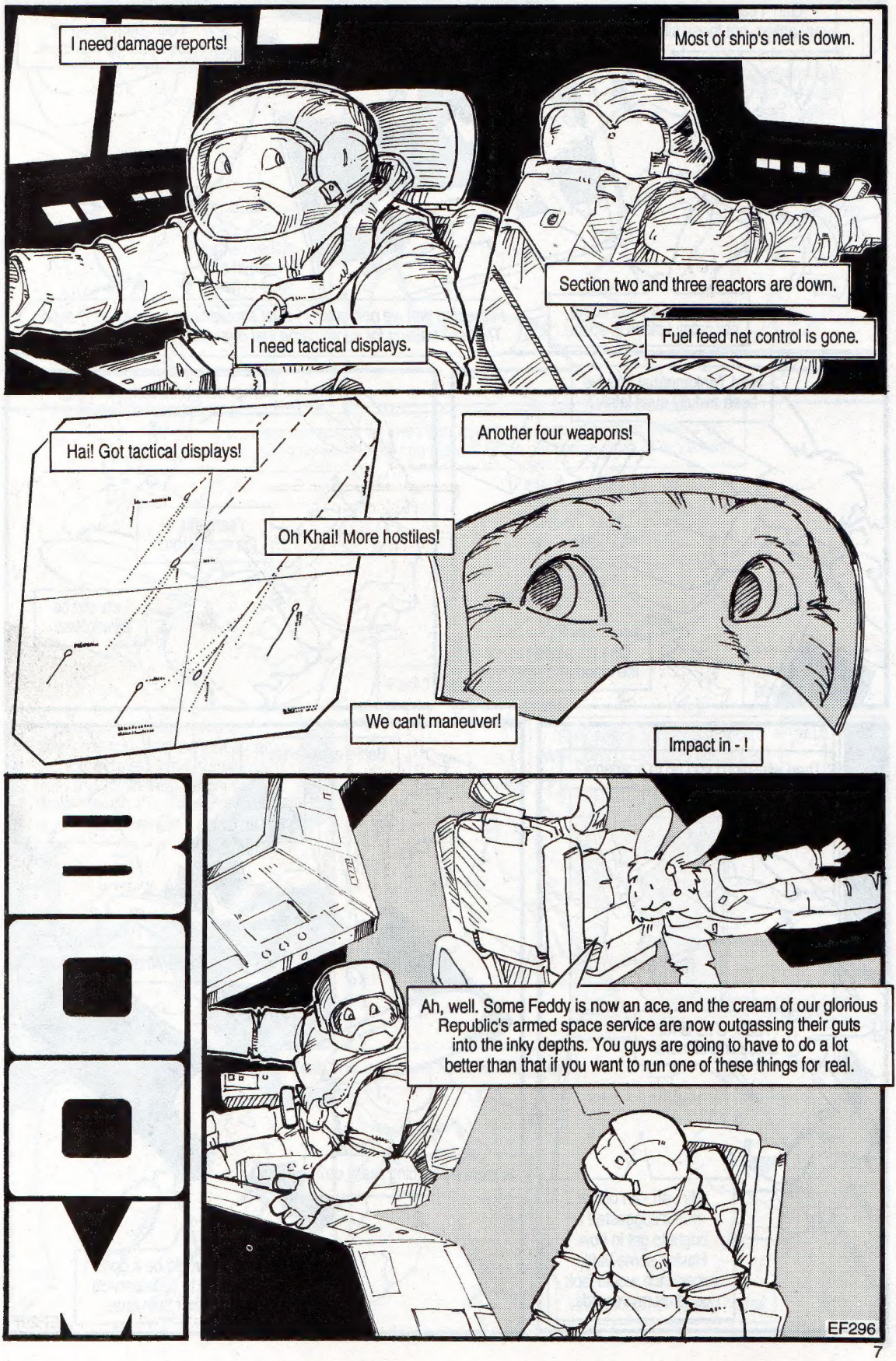


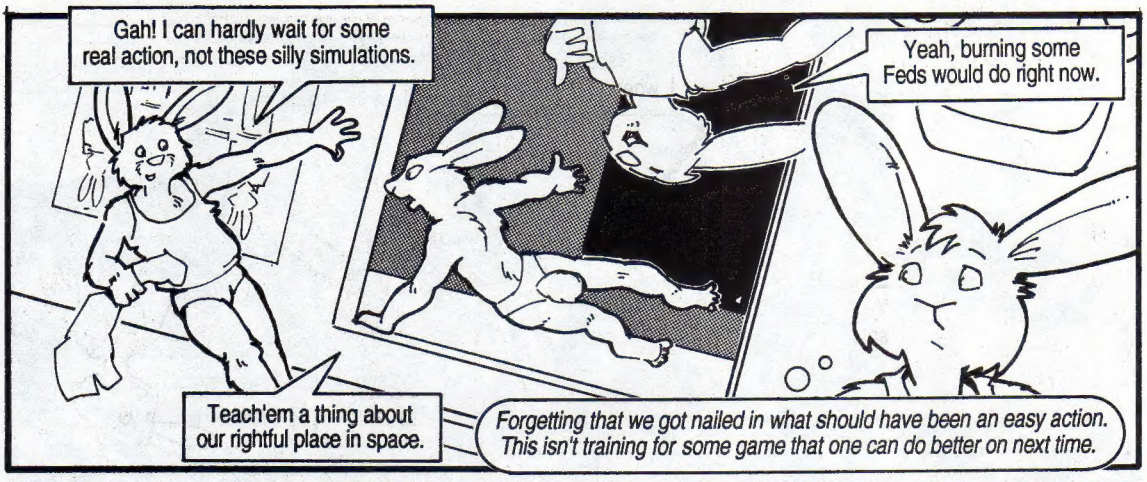
* A. T. Enchawah is the chairman and heir to the Enchawah group, the biggest "multi-national" corporation in existence. It owns fifteen star systems outright and operates in virtually all the rest of known space. Second only to the EDF in starship fleet size, it controls economic resources equal to the rest of Confed space. Amhast is the richest and most powerful individual alive.

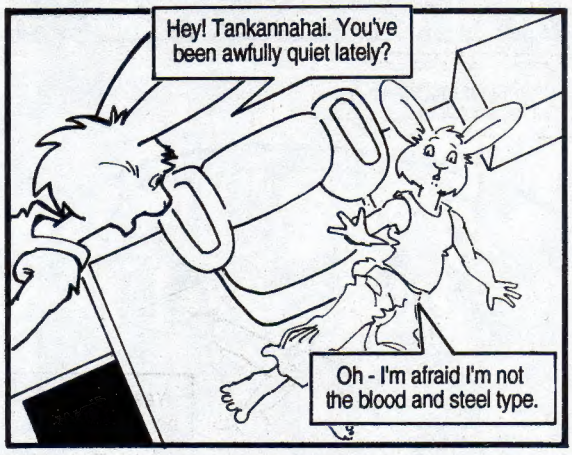
EF293

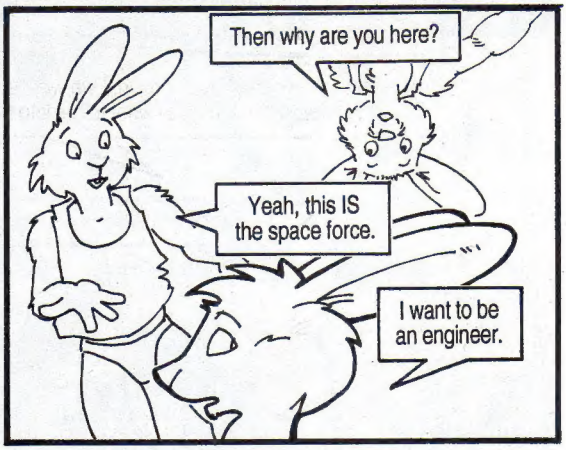

- You -
But why? And why you?
Who better to represent Enchawah intentions with you? You are an individual of exceptional talents and potential. You would be a considerable asset to us.
We would make no special demands on you; any previous allegiances or confidences you wish to keep we will respect.
However, I would hope we could count on your future loyalty with us.
Uhmm - given the circumstances.
I'm delighted. How soon would you like a posting?
Oh. I don't know. Could it be off-planet?
May I ask - what will happen to Tetsuwah?
I regret to say that he has chosen not to surrender to Security.
I understand.
EF294

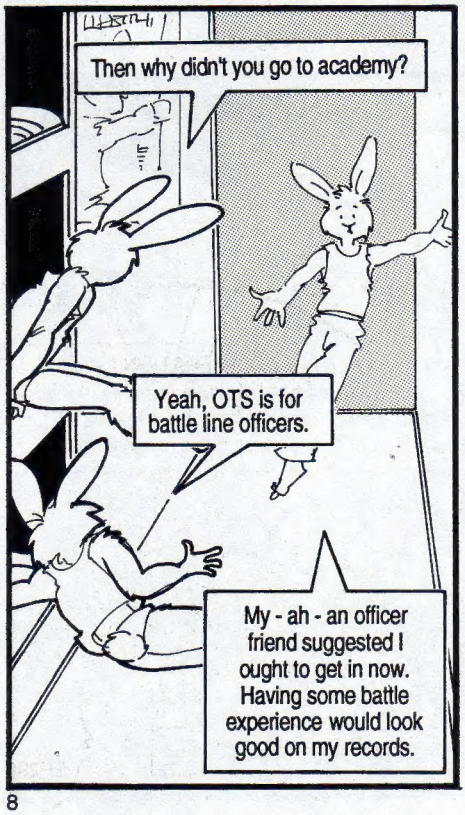
Well, Brother mine, did you know that A. Therka Enchawah was by today, offering me a job?
I told you your talents would not go unnoticed.
I'll be leaving again, probably to the Rim.
And Tetsuwah is dead. Did you know that he was a spy?
What are you talking about?
He was a telepath, sent to steal my memories.
Elaki, you're not joking!
Not Eto, but Amhast! Amhast Enchawah was *here?* And Tetsuwah - .
Oh, Sister! I'm so sorry for you. Do you want to see Mother?
No. Don't tell her anything.
Oh, Chatti, I thought I could finally have someone to live with - . Will I have to be on my guard forever?
Come on, Elaki. Let's go see Mother, just to tell her about Amhast. You need to live through this and go on.
Please let me alone for a while, I've got some sorting out to do.
EF295

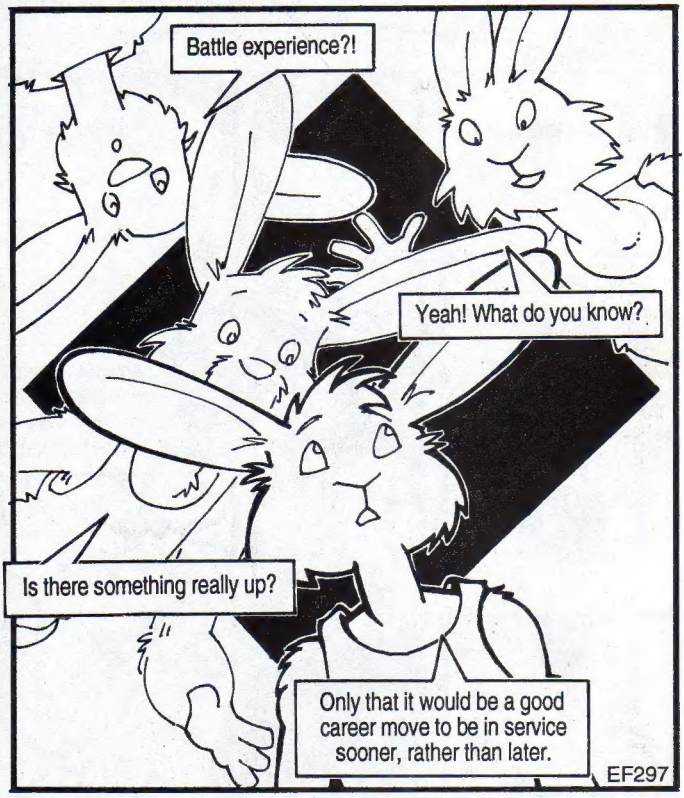

I need damage reports!
Most of ship's net is down.
Section two and three reactors are down.
I need tactical displays.
Fuel feed net control is gone.
Hai! Got tactical displays!
Another four weapons!
Oh Khai! More hostiles!
We can't maneuver!
Impact in - !
Ah, well. Some Feddy is now an ace, and the cream of our glorious Republic's armed space service are now outgassing their guts into the inky depths. You guys are going to have to do a lot better than that if you want to run one of these things for real.
EF296

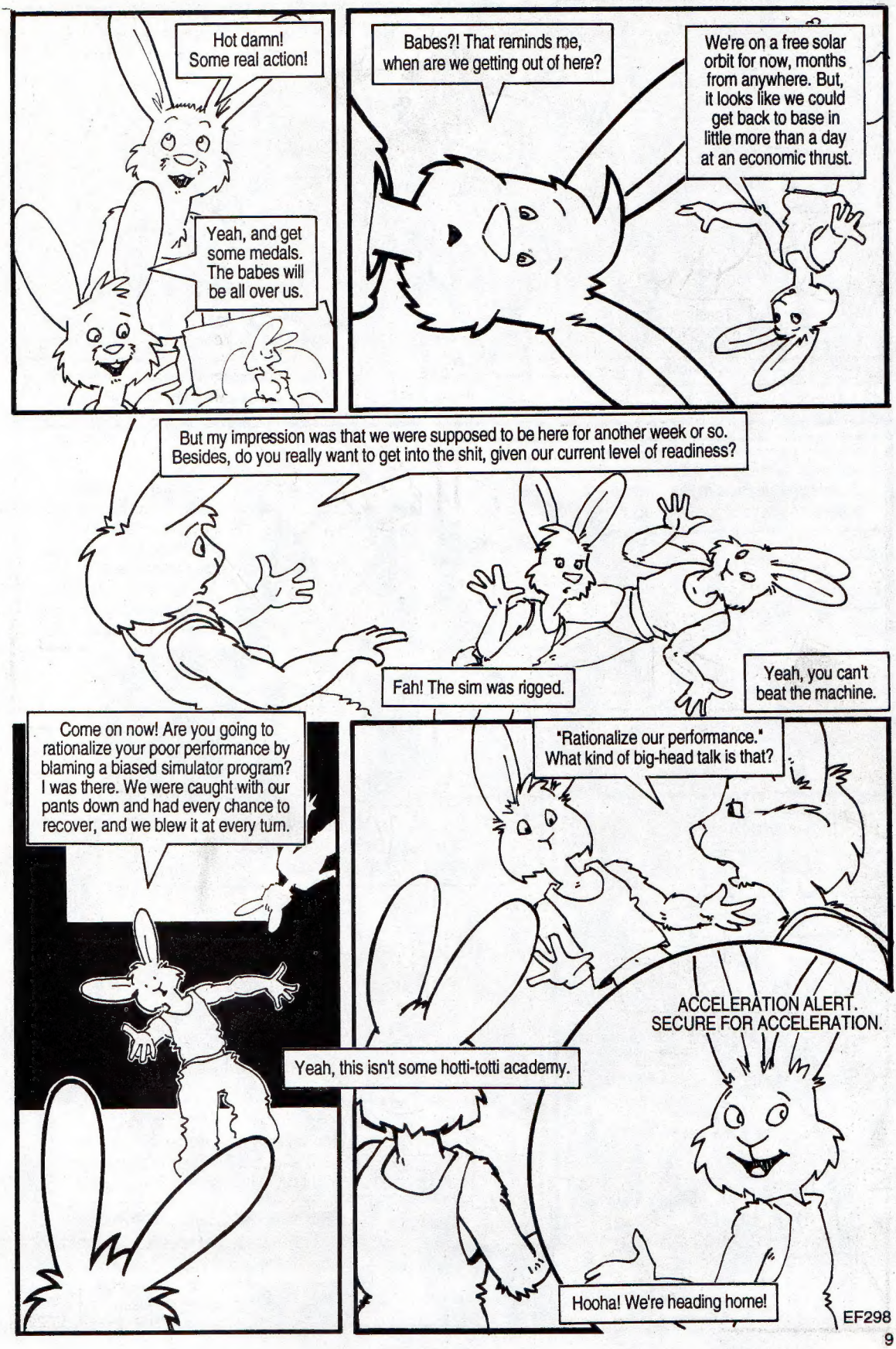

Gah! I can hardly wait for some real action, not these silly simulations.
Yeah, burning some Feds would do right now.
Teach'em a thing about our rightful place in space.
Forgetting that we got nailed in what should have been an easy action. This isn't training for some game that one can do better on next time.

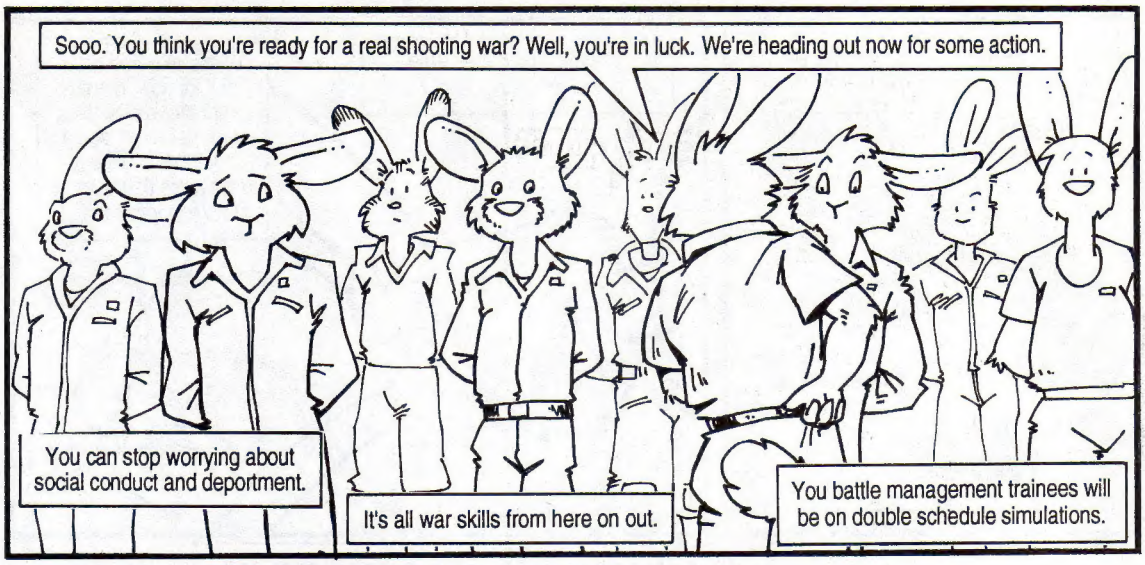

Hey! Tankannahai. You've been awfully quiet lately?
Oh - I'm afraid I'm not the blood and steel type.

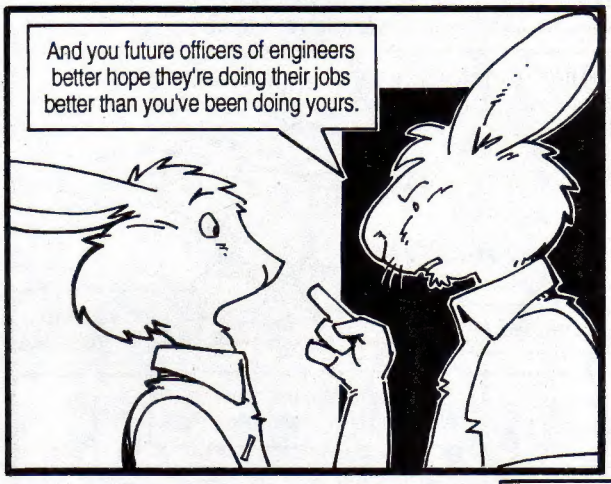

Then why are you here?
Yeah, this IS the space force.
I want to be an engineer.

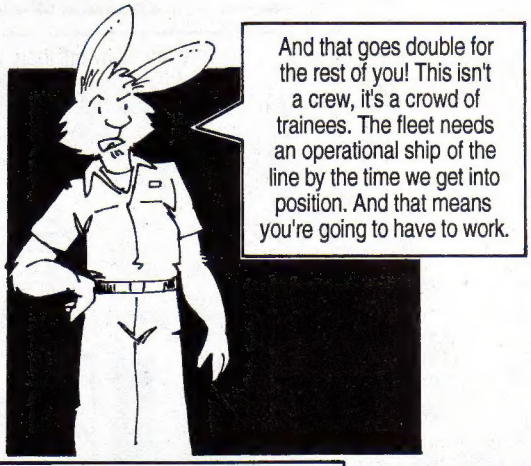

Then why didn't you go to academy?
Yeah, OTS is for battle line officers.
My - ah - an officer friend suggested I ought to get in now. Having some battle experience would look good on my records.

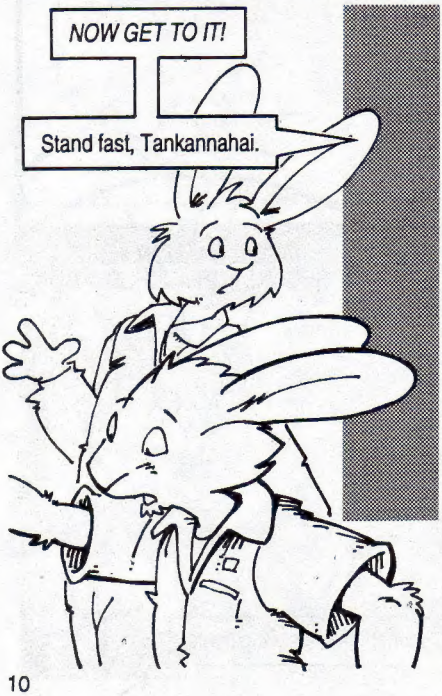

Battle experience?!
Yeah! What do you know?
Is there something really up?
Only that it would be a good career move to be in service sooner, rather than later.
EF297

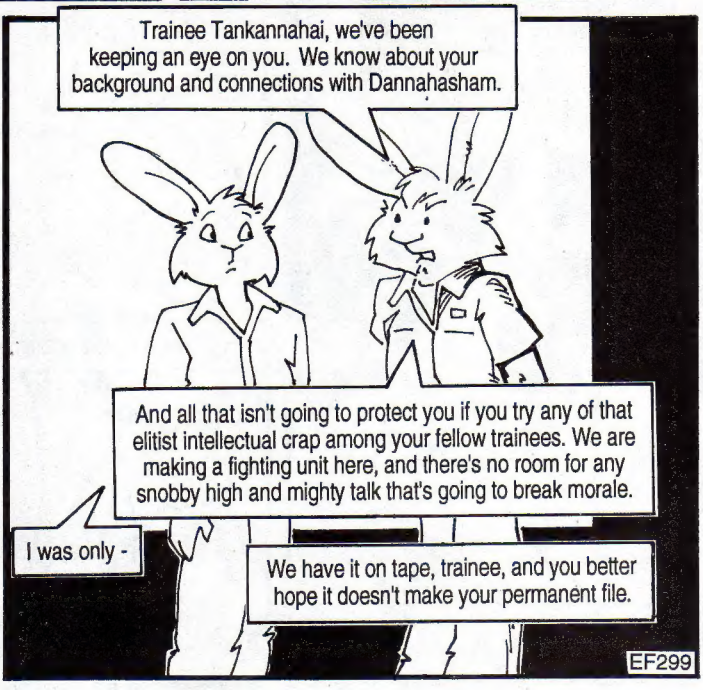

Hot damn! Some real action!
Yeah, and get some medals. The babes will be all over us.
Babes?! That reminds me, when are we getting out of here?
We're on a free solar orbit for now, months from anywhere. But, it looks like we could get back to base in little more than a day at an economic thrust.
But my impression was that we were supposed to be here for another week or so. Besides, do you really want to get into the shit, given our current level of readiness?
Fah! The sim was rigged.
Yeah, you can't beat the machine.
Come on now! Are you going to rationalize your poor performance by blaming a biased simulator program? I was there. We were caught with our pants down and had every chance to recover, and we blew it at every turn.
"Rationalize our performance." What kind of big-head talk is that?
ACCELERATION ALERT. SECURE FOR ACCELERATION.
Yeah, this isn't some hotti-totti academy.
Hooha! We're heading home!


Sooo. You think you're ready for a real shooting war? Well, you're in luck. We're heading out now for some action.
You can stop worrying about social conduct and deportment.
It's all war skills from here on out.
You battle management trainees will be on double schedule simulations.

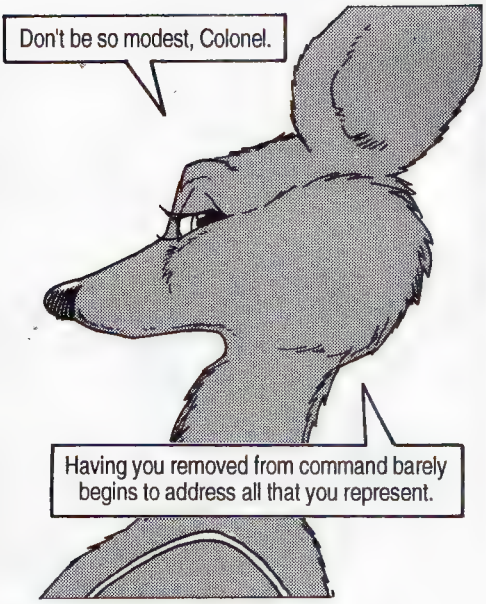

And you future officers of engineers better hope they're doing their jobs better than you've been doing yours.

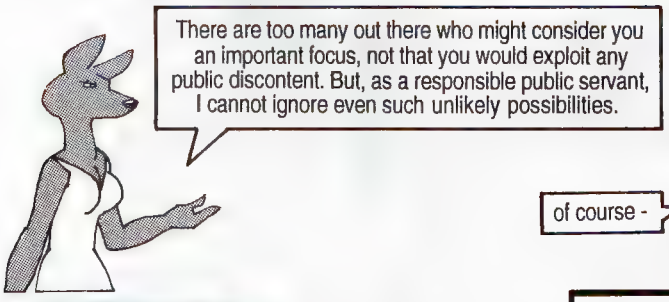

And that goes double for the rest of you! This isn't a crew, it's a crowd of trainees. The fleet needs an operational ship of the line by the time we get into position. And that means you're going to have to work.


NOW GET TO IT!
Stand fast, Tankannahai.


Trainee Tankannahai, we've been keeping an eye on you. We know about your background and connections with Dannahasham.
And all that isn't going to protect you if you try any of that elitist intellectual crap among your fellow trainees. We are making a fighting unit here, and there's no room for any snobby high and mighty talk that's going to break morale.
I was only -
We have it on tape, trainee, and you better hope it doesn't make your permanent file.
EF299

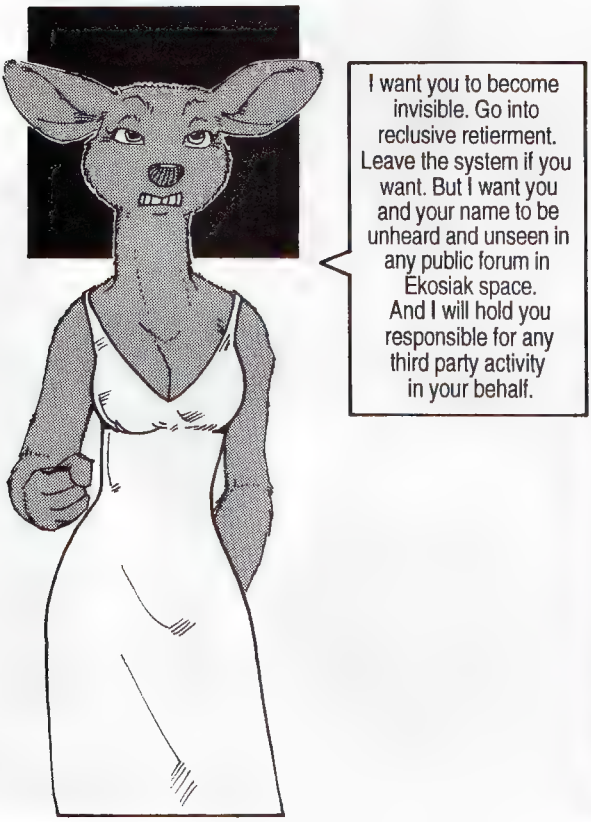
Well Colonel. What *will* we do with you?
uhm?
I would have thought that you have done quite enough - .


Don't be so modest, Colonel.
Having you removed from command barely begins to address all that you represent.

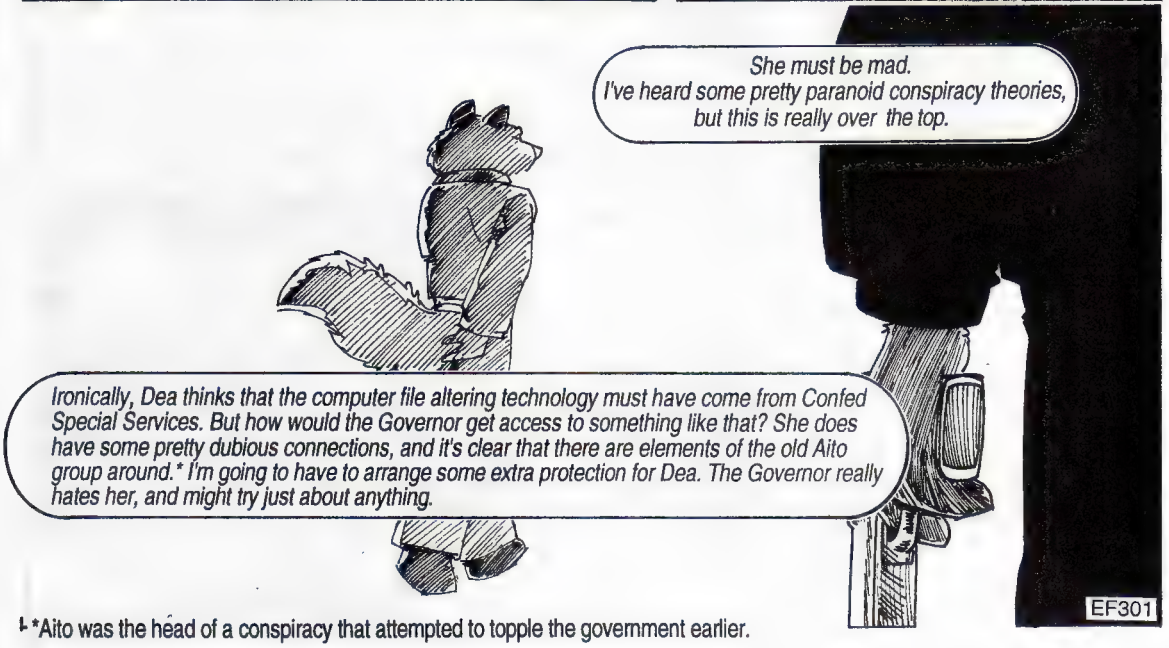

There are too many out there who might consider you an important focus, not that you would exploit any public discontent. But, as a responsible public servant, I cannot ignore even such unlikely possibilities.

of course -

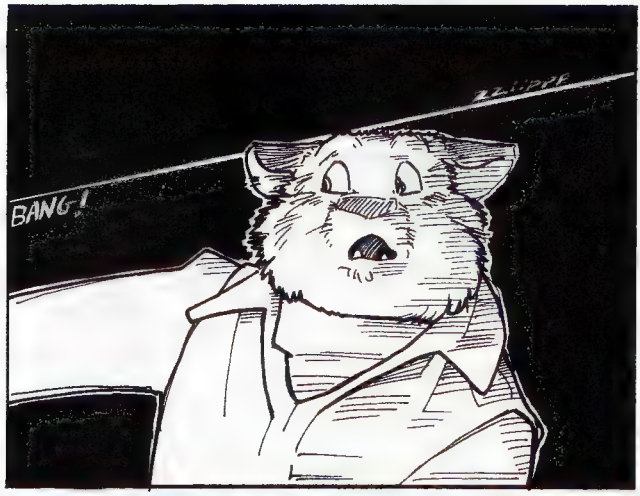
What of Secretary Kho?


I want you to become invisible. Go into reclusive retierment. Leave the system if you want. But I want you and your name to be unheard and unseen in any public forum in Ekosiak space. And I will hold you responsible for any third party activity in your behalf.

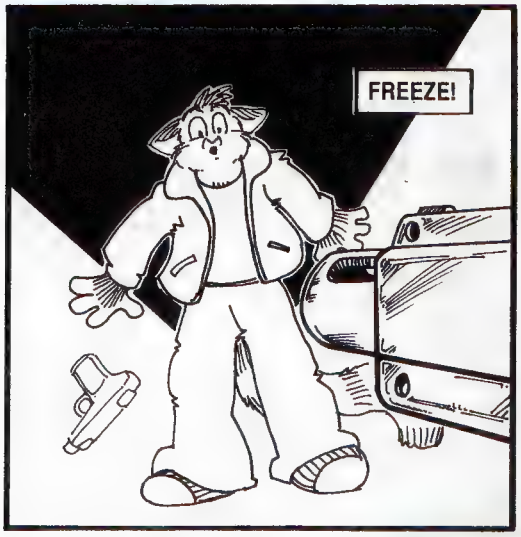
That - !
EF300



*Aito was the head of a conspiracy that attempted to topple the government earlier.

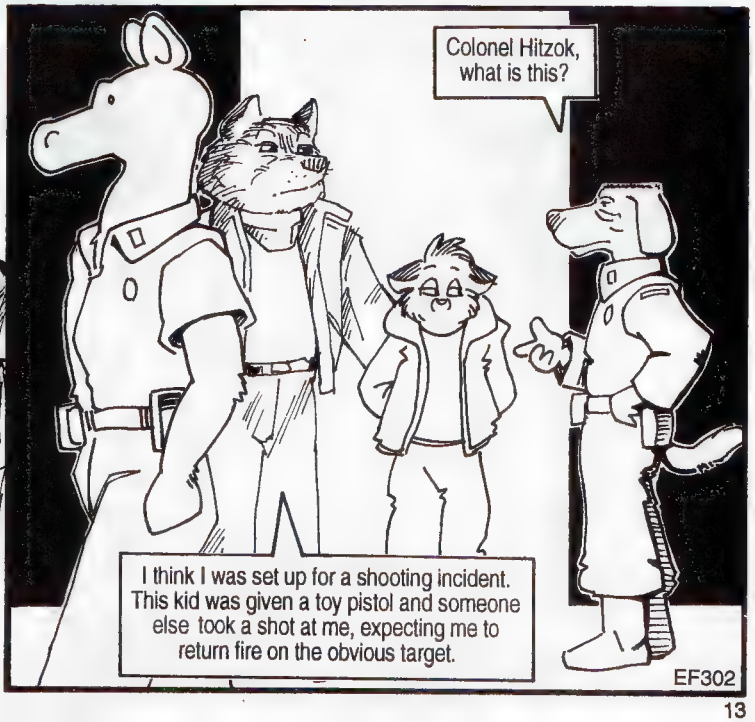

BANG!

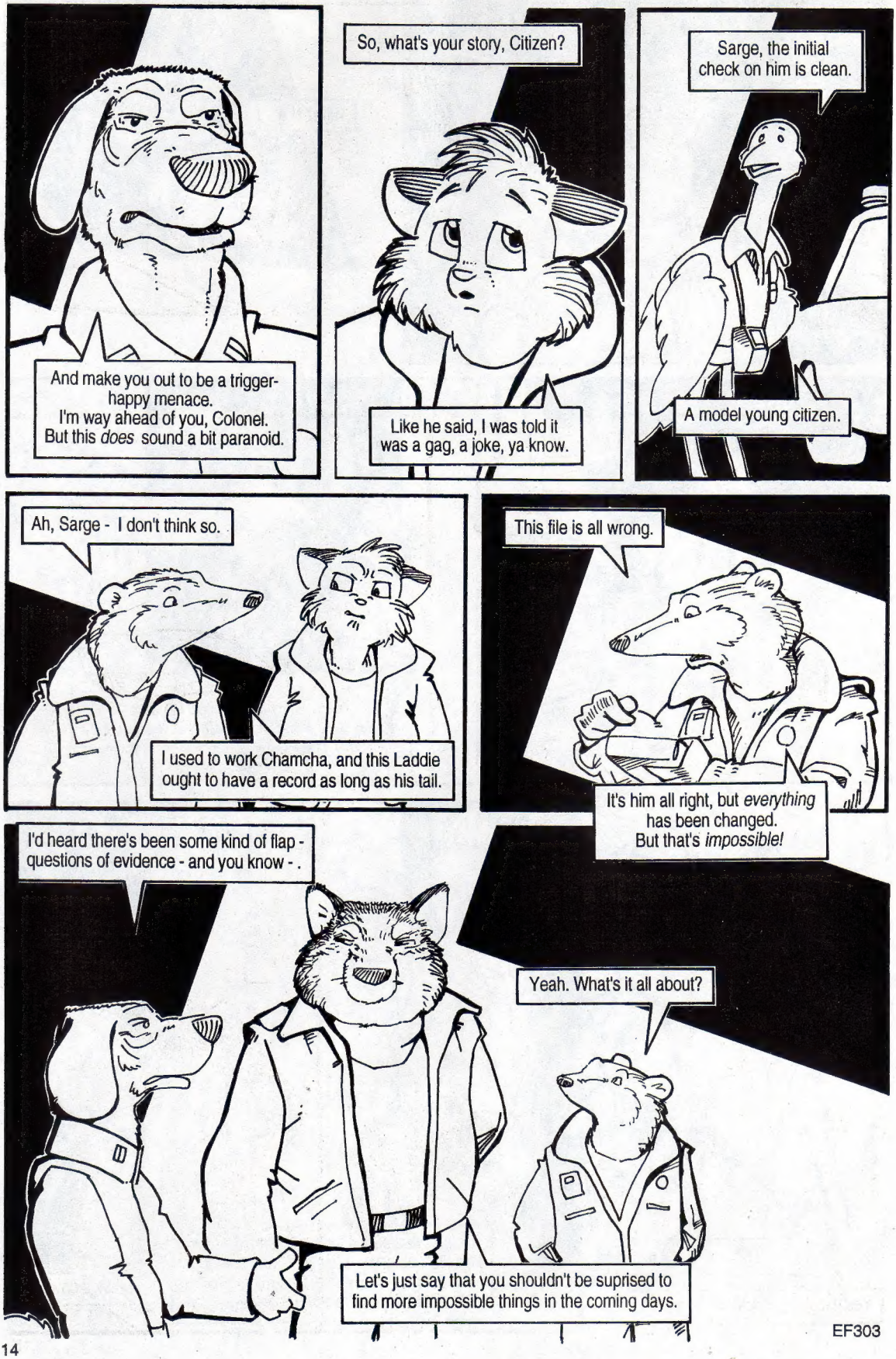
What the - !


FREEZE!

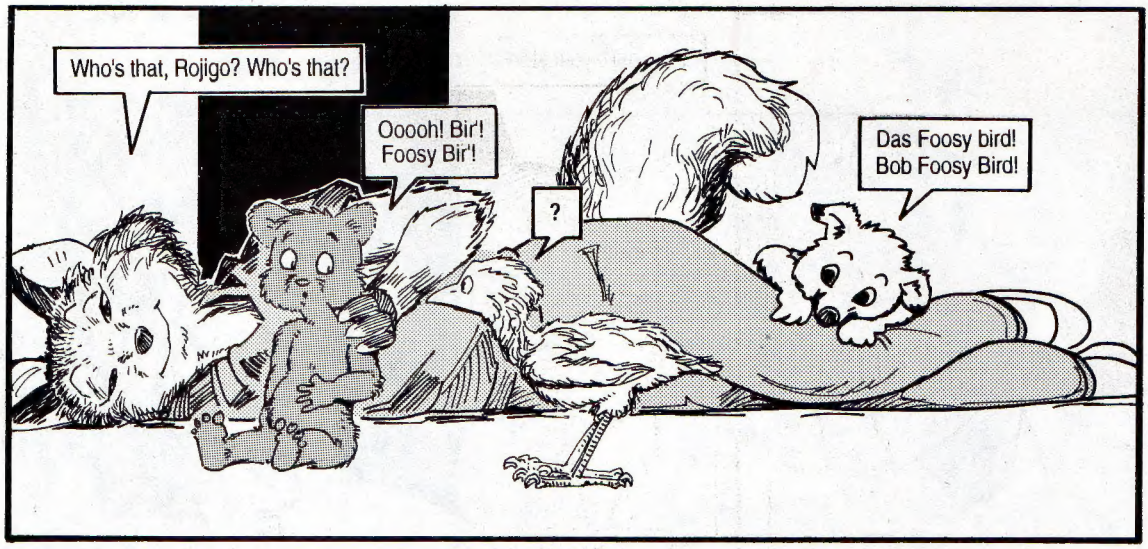
Now talk!
Hey, Mister.
It was supposed to be a gag!
I don't know nutt'n about that shot!

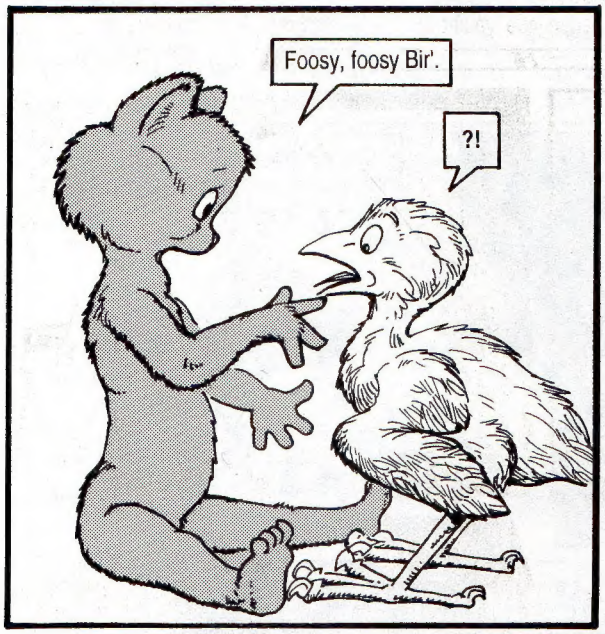
See! The gun is just a toy.

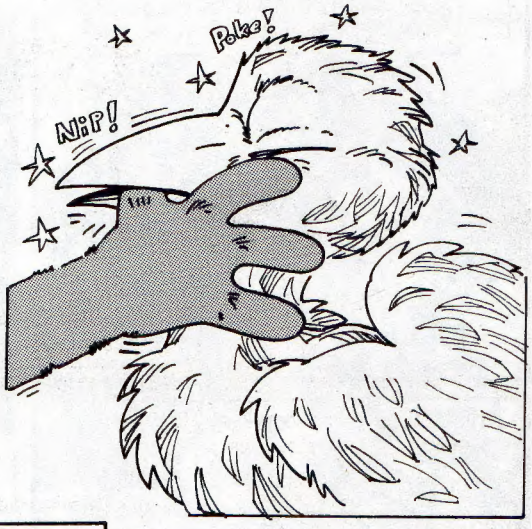

Colonel Hitzok, what is this?
I think I was set up for a shooting incident. This kid was given a toy pistol and someone else took a shot at me, expecting me to return fire on the obvious target.
EF302


And make you out to be a trigger-happy menace.
I'm way ahead of you, Colonel.
But this *does* sound a bit paranoid.
So, what's your story, Citizen?
Like he said, I was told it was a gag, a joke, ya know.
Sarge, the initial check on him is clean.
A model young citizen.
Ah, Sarge - I don't think so.
I used to work Chamcha, and this Laddie ought to have a record as long as his tail.
This file is all wrong.
It's him all right, but *everything* has been changed.
But that's *impossible!*
I'd heard there's been some kind of flap - questions of evidence - and you know - .
Yeah. What's it all about?
Let's just say that you shouldn't be suprised to find more impossible things in the coming days.

EF303

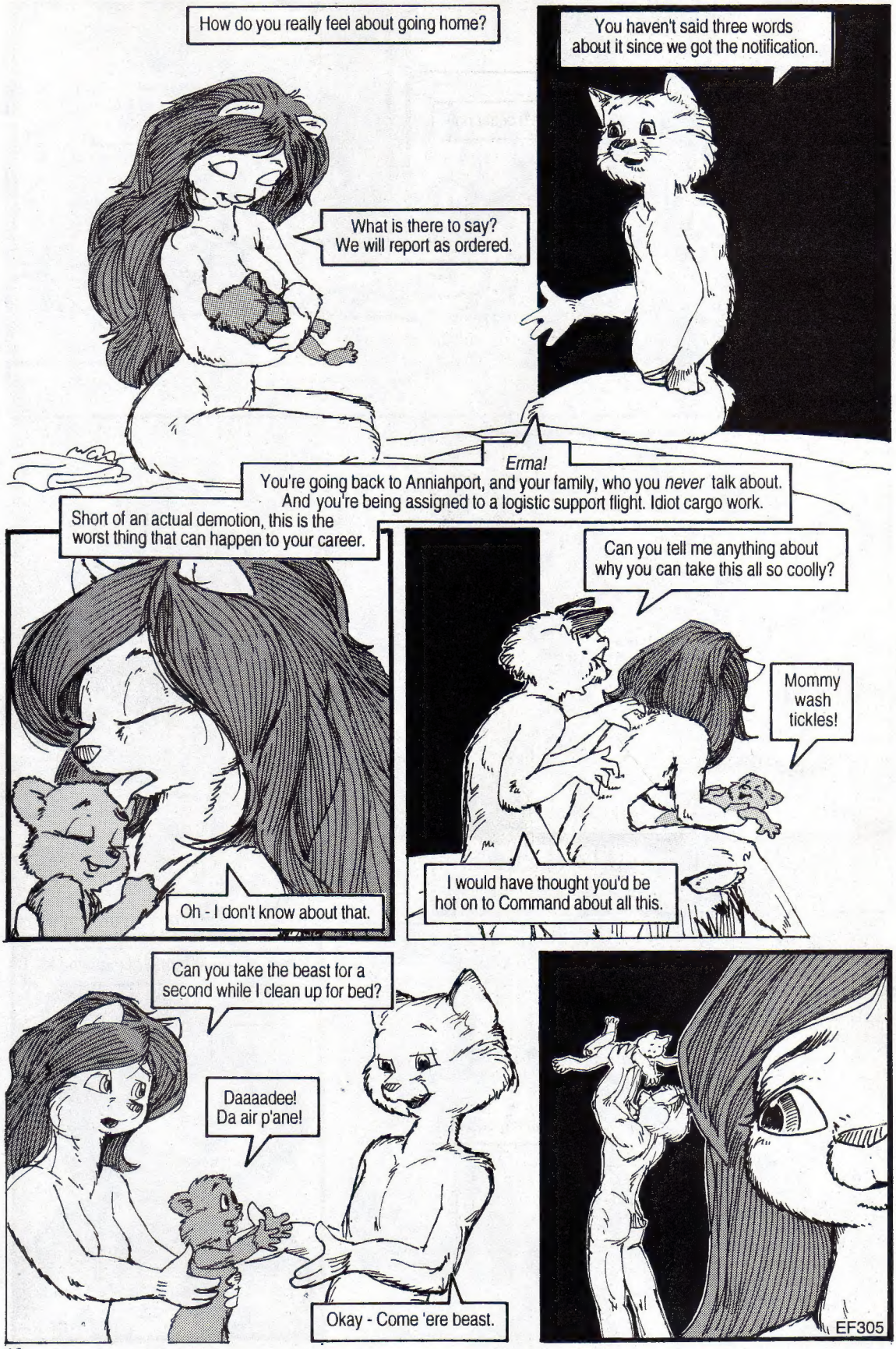

Who's that, Rojigo? Who's that?
Ooooh! Bir'! Foosy Bir'!
?
Das Foosy bird! Bob Foosy Bird!

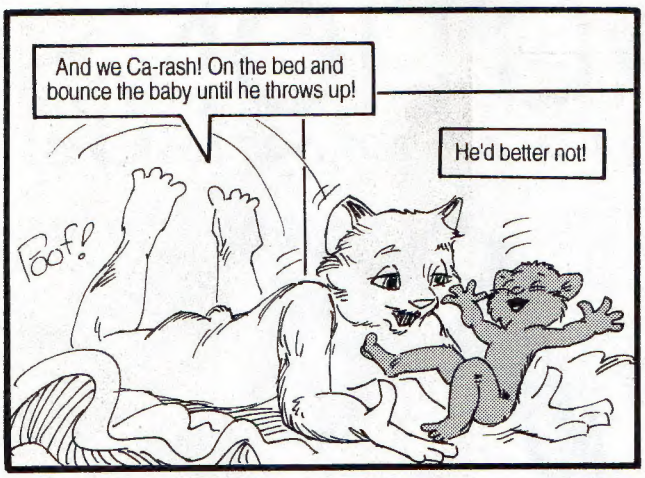

Foosy, foosy Bir'.
?!

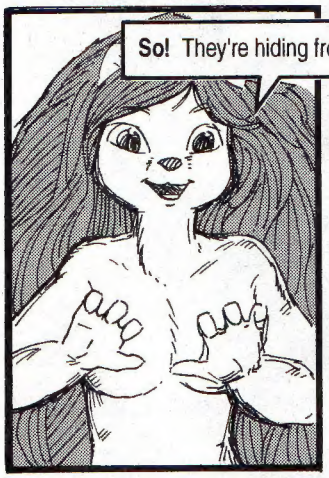

Poke!
Nip!

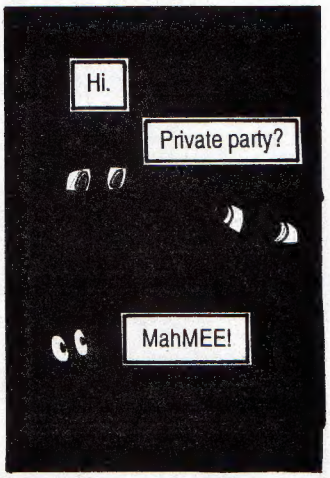
Oh my! I got here just in time. Did you get my message?
Yes. Rojigo and you will be missed.

Yes.
And I'll miss you all.
Here- Let me help settle things down.
EF304


How do you really feel about going home?
What is there to say? We will report as ordered.
You haven't said three words about it since we got the notification.
Erma!
You're going back to Anniahport, and your family, who you *never* talk about. And you're being assigned to a logistic support flight. Idiot cargo work.
Short of an actual demotion, this is the worst thing that can happen to your career.
Oh - I don't know about that.
Can you tell me anything about why you can take this all so coolly?
Mommy wash tickles!
I would have thought you'd be hot on to Command about all this.
Can you take the beast for a second while I clean up for bed?
Daaaadee! Da air p'ane!
Okay - Come 'ere beast.
EF305







Alfon, I'm not reacting to the orders because I'm not sure what's really going on.

What do you mean? Our orders couldn't be more specific. Unless there's something you're not telling me?

Yawn!

Well, let's just say that I don't believe that those orders are the real assignment. As you said yourself, I'm too important an asset to languish in such a position.

And why would I be called in from half-way across known space for a job any squadron officer could do?

For everyone's sake, I hope you're right. How's Toki taking it?

I think she's got an eye on someone to keep her busy for a while.

Good for her!

EF306